

The Federal Flyer

Senate Quietly Adopts FY 2002 Transportation Spending Bill *Debate Over Mexican Truck Safety Provisions Heading for Conference*

On August 1, the United States Senate approved by voice vote a \$60.1 billion FY 2002 Transportation Appropriations bill (HR 2299). The funding represents a \$2 billion increase over FY 2001 and some \$200 million above the levels authorized in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21).

When consideration of the measure reaches conference in September, **Texas Senator Phil Gramm** (R) has vowed to continue the fight against a disputed amendment that imposes more stringent safety standards on Mexican motor carriers than are required of American and Canadian motor carriers. Advisors to **President George W. Bush** have recommended that the president veto the measure should the Mexican truck safety amendment remain in the bill after conference. Opponents to the amendment maintain that it is discriminatory and violates the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) enacted in 1993. Also, a NAFTA arbitration panel ruled in February that the US must allow Mexican trucks to operate beyond the current 20-mile commercial zone along the border.

According to the Senate committee report accompanying HR 2299, Texas should receive \$2.17 billion under the Senate's proposed distribution of federal highway formula program funds, including Revenue Aligned Budget Authority (RABA). In addition, Texas stands to share a significant part of a proposed \$56 million earmark for construction of border safety inspection facilities along the Southwest border. These funds, if approved, would be in addition to the \$15 million earmark in the bill for Texas border safety inspection stations. Other Texas discretionary highway program earmarks total \$14 million. For transit, the bill provides Texas \$188.3 million in formula funds, \$10.1 million in bus discretionary program funds, \$8.1 million in fixed guideway modernization program funds, \$99 million in new starts transit discretionary program funds, and \$1.65 million in funds from the Job Access Reverse Commute Program.

The House-Senate conference committee on HR 2299 will not convene until early September, when the Congress returns from its annual August recess. We will resume publication of the **Federal Flyer** at that time.

The **Federal Flyer** is a publication of the TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office. It is intended to provide up-to-date information on major legislative activities in the 107th Congress for the management of the Texas Department of Transportation, state leaders, and others interested in Texas transportation issues. This report will also feature key activities in the national transportation community. Sources include news services and staff reports.

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